

# Appendix D

## Methodology

In November 2011, NACCRRA sent a request to child care licensing directors in all 51 states (including the District of Columbia) and a representative from the Office of Family Policy/ Office of Children and Youth in the Department of Defense (DoD). We asked them to verify the accuracy of information we had gathered about specific licensing regulations in their state related to small family child care homes.

The data was based on NACCRRA's *Leaving Children to Chance* 2008 and 2010 reports and our examination of licensing regulations that had changed since the 2010 report. Licensing directors were asked to provide information about changes including specific citations notating the change. This information was verified using the state child care regulations gathered by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education or other written documents. Information for DoD was taken from the *Department of Defense Instruction 6060.2* and other relevant Department of Defense documents.<sup>65</sup> We received responses from all 51 states and DoD. Regulatory changes that are in the consideration phase or had not yet taken effect by March 2012 (when this report was released) were not credited. There were instances in which individual states clarified their existing requirements, resulting in adjustments to coding of some items even though there were no actual changes to regulations since 2010.

States were given credit only if the regulation could be verified in a written document such as the state's regulations or policy manual. States did not receive credit if written documentation could not be found or if the language in the regulation was permissive (e.g, the program may or may not follow a regulation). In cases where states permit several different options for complying (e.g., complying with family child care education qualifications), the minimum allowed was used.

Benchmark criteria were developed by NACCRRA and have been used for the 2008, 2010 and 2012 *Leaving Children to Chance* reports, with changes for 2012 as described below. The rationale for each standard, including research evidence of its importance in quality care, is noted in each section of the report and in previous reports.

### Scoring

For 2012, the scoring methodology for small family child care was adjusted to be more consistent with the scoring approach for the *We Can Do Better* report, NACCRRA's biennial ranking of child care centers. The major effect of this adjustment was to place greater emphasis on oversight standards, consistent with those for *We Can Do Better*. This change was made because of our conviction that strong program regulations are meaningless without strong oversight. This change affected final scores even for some states that did not have any substantive change in regulations.

Although this change prevents direct comparison with NACCRRA's previous years' small family child care reports, it is more conceptually in line with our scoring of child care center regulations. The following adjustments were made to small family child care scoring:

1. Addition of scoring for licensing staff caseload (ratio of program: staff).
2. Addition of scoring for licensing staff qualifications.
3. Addition of scoring for availability of online inspection and complaint reports for parents.
4. Adjustment of scoring for initial training.
5. Adjustment of scoring for inspections.

States could receive a maximum of 10 points for each of the areas scored or partial credit based on state requirements. Based on the number of children allowed in the home before licensing begins, NACCRRA used a sliding fractional scale to arrive at the final score. The total maximum points a state could receive is 150.

The total score was adjusted for some states based on select criteria:

### **1. Threshold at which required licensing/ regulation begins:**

Final scores reflect an adjustment based on the number of children providers could have in their care before they are required to be licensed/ registered.

To derive the total number of children in care, NACCRRA started with the number of children in care when state licensing begins. One child was added if the state does not include the provider's own children in the licensing threshold. One child was added for each family exempted before licensing begins. In states where the threshold for required licensing is two or more children (or families), the total score was adjusted progressively depending on the threshold at which licensing begins.

In some states, regulation for small family child care providers is voluntary or only required for participation in subsidy programs. This report scores the lowest level of regulation applicable to all providers.

### **2. Inspection before licensing:**

States receive a zero if they do not visit family child care homes prior to issuing a license. The score these states otherwise would have received is recorded, but this score is not used for ranking. These states are ranked at the bottom of the charts that show scores in descending order reflecting their total points. For example Michigan is ranked 37<sup>th</sup> because the state would have received the highest total of points (107) among states scoring zero if only the state had conducted an inspection before granting a license.

### **3. No required regulation for small family child care homes:**

This report scores the states that regulate small family child care homes, which NACCRRA defines as caring for six or fewer children in the home. States received a zero score if they do not license family child care, or the number of children (including the provider's own children) who the provider can care for without a license is seven or greater.

The information was used to generate state sheets with a total score, scores for each standard and a list of strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for each state. Generally, scores less than 50 percent (half moon) were noted as a weakness, while scores above 75 percent (three-quarter moon) were noted as a strength.